

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

America's public libraries are confronting dramatic changes as they proceed into the second decade of the 21st century. While many factors are contributing to this turbulent environment, two in particular, the emergence of new technologies and growing financial constraints, are paramount.

The Internet has fundamentally changed the way reference services are offered and, while there have been digital e-book readers for well over a decade, they are finally gaining traction in a way that challenges traditional methods of delivering content to the public. Simultaneously, library budgets have experienced substantial cuts in many locales as states, counties, municipalities and other units of government struggle to balance their budgets.

Given these realities, it is clear that Tennessee's current system of regional library centers is not sustainable in its existing form. The needs and challenges facing local libraries are enormous; however, earlier budget cuts have already eroded the range of services the regional centers are able to offer. Even without the impetus of a pending State budget reduction, the time is right for the reinvention of Tennessee's system of regional library centers. Economies achieved by nibbling around the edges of a dated service model will accomplish little more than lengthening a period of gradual decline into irrelevance for the regional centers and local libraries with a significant detrimental effect on local library services.

In May 2010, the Tennessee State Library & Archives (TSLA) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for "Consulting Services for Evaluation of Regional Library System Services." Himmel & Wilson, Library Consultants, submitted a proposal in response to the RFP and was subsequently selected to conduct the study.

For the last six months, TSLA and the existing regional libraries have been working with Himmel & Wilson to develop a new organizational structure and plan of service for Tennessee's regional libraries. In the course of the study, the consultants gathered information from a wide variety of sources. Overall, the consultants have interacted with more than 900 Tennessee residents through web-based surveys, focus groups and personal interviews.

Findings

The priorities for the regional library centers that were expressed by various groups of stakeholders were remarkably similar. For example, it was very clear that libraries need and want assistance with technology. There was also a high degree of agreement that the consulting/professional assistance offered by regional library directors was essential to the

improvement of libraries. Cataloging and the physical processing of materials purchased with State and Federal funds is a high priority for small libraries and the need for continuing education and training is great.

Recommendations

The consultants developed a set of principles to apply to decisions regarding the restructuring of regional services. They are:

- The mission of the regional service centers is to support and improve local libraries rather than being a direct provider of services to end-users.
- Service priorities should be driven by the future needs of libraries rather than by what already exists or by what has existed in the past.
- The number and size of service centers under the new model should be determined primarily by the number and size needed to effectively deliver the core services to be offered.
- The new model should encourage and enable libraries to share their scarce resources more efficiently.
- End results (e.g., getting materials cataloged and processed) is more important than how the results are achieved (e.g., in-house cataloging and processing staff, pre-processing/outsourcing, etc.).

The mission of Tennessee's **new** system of regional library centers is:

- *to assist local governments and public libraries in the development and improvement of public library services,*
- *to assist libraries in the selection, maintenance and use of library technologies,*
- *to provide supplementary library materials and digital content to member public libraries and to facilitate the preparation of materials for public use (cataloging & processing),*
- *to facilitate the sharing of resources between and among libraries through a delivery system and opportunities to participate in shared automation systems and,*
- *to provide continuing education to local library staff and trustees.*

The proposed plan for reinventing regional library services does more than simply re-arrange services. Some existing services go away. At the same time, and in spite of working with a reduced budget, new services are added. Remarkably, the new model allocates more funding to the purchase of library materials for local libraries. It establishes a delivery system to facilitate the sharing of materials between and among libraries. It expands technology support

services and creates the framework through which small libraries can participate in a shared automation system.

Some existing services are maintained and strengthened. Consulting and professional assistance and advice services are strengthened and the capacity for regions to provide continuing education and training is expanded modestly.

In order to move in these new directions, some services must be eliminated and/or modified. The number of regional offices is reduced from twelve to nine. The outreach services provided by some the regions (direct services to end-users rather than support services provided to libraries) are transferred to public libraries to the greatest extent possible. Highly labor-intensive methodologies currently used by some regions for cataloging and processing materials are replaced with a streamlined process that involves outsourcing most cataloging and processing services under a centralized contract.

INTRODUCTION

America's public libraries are confronting dramatic changes as they proceed into the second decade of the 21st century. While many factors are contributing to this turbulent environment, two in particular, the emergence of new technologies and growing financial constraints, are paramount. Neither of these factors is unfamiliar to libraries. Many libraries have been integrating digital technologies into their service offerings successfully for thirty years or more and modest budgets have been the traveling companions of America's public libraries in their journey of service for well over 100 years.

However, something appears to be different this time around. Both the magnitude of technological change and the severity of budgetary woes are greater today than they have been at any time in recent history. The Internet has fundamentally changed the way reference services are offered and, while there have been digital e-book readers for well over a decade, they are finally gaining traction in a way that challenges traditional methods of delivering content to the public. Simultaneously, library budgets have experienced substantial cuts in many locales as states, counties, municipalities and other units of government struggle to balance their budgets. Property values have stagnated and, with them, property tax revenues have fallen. Income tax and sales tax revenues have also dropped.

It appears that things will never be the same again. Libraries must deal with a "new normal" characterized by accelerated technological change and budgets that are stretched to the limit.

Given these realities, it is clear that Tennessee's current system of regional library centers is not sustainable in its existing form. The needs and challenges facing local libraries are enormous; however, earlier budget cuts have already eroded the range of services the regional centers are able to offer. Even without the impetus of a pending State budget reduction, the time is right for the reinvention of Tennessee's system of regional library centers. Economies achieved by nibbling around the edges of a dated service model will accomplish little more than lengthening a period of gradual decline into irrelevance for both the regional centers and local libraries.

Some have suggested that public libraries are dying institutions. If this is so, the general public hasn't gotten the news! Public library usage is, in fact, at an all time high. In many communities, the public library is the most visited public facility. Attendance in high profile sports arenas pale in comparison to the number of people crossing the thresholds of public libraries in communities large and small.

People come to public libraries for many reasons. Yes, they still come in droves to use print-on-paper books and magazines, but they also bring their pre-school children to story hours where they are introduced to the joy of reading in a positive and supportive environment. They come

to use the public access computers to apply for jobs, to advance their employment prospects by taking online courses or to research the history of their family or community. They come to advance their education and to advance their business pursuits. And they come to interact with their neighbors and to participate in the life of their communities. Public libraries have become what author Ray Oldenburg described as a “third place;” a place that is not home or work/school, but a “great good place... where people get together for conversation, to make social connections, and interact across social lines.” In a world characterized by “tweets,” facebook posts and other virtual communications, people are seeking places in their communities where they can interact face-to-face.

Public libraries are essential public institutions that will offer public access to information, education and recreation for decades to come. However, if they are to operate efficiently and are to retain their relevance, they must reinvent themselves by adding new content delivery mechanisms while continuing to support access to traditional resources. This is a challenge that most local libraries will not be able to meet on their own. A system of highly-functional, strategically-located regional library centers is an extremely cost-effective way for the State of Tennessee to support the vitality of its communities and to enhance the lives of its residents.

Meeting the twin challenges of technological change and fiscal constraints must be priorities in designing a new model of service for Tennessee’s system of regional libraries. Furthermore, the redesign of the regional centers must look forward rather than backward. Tennessee needs to develop regional centers that will enable local libraries to succeed in the future rather than propping up old service models that will eventually fail.

The development of advanced shared library automation systems, the proliferation of wireless devices and the emergence of downloadable content as a viable service delivery mechanism when coupled with an anticipated reduction of approximately \$1.4 million in State support for the regional libraries demands the design of a new, sustainable model for supporting local libraries. The Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA) must refine the mission of the regions and must work with the regions to streamline their operations in order to ensure that local libraries can meet the library and information needs of the people of the Volunteer State.

Tennessee’s system of regional library centers is among the oldest (if not the oldest) of its type in the nation. The idea of fostering public library development through regionally-based offices grew out of the work of Mary Utopia Rothrock for the Tennessee Valley Authority in the mid 1930s. Although many changes have taken place in Tennessee’s regional library structure through the decades, ensuring public access to quality library services has remained the highest priority.

In order to address the challenges of the present and to position libraries to serve the public in the future, TSLA has been working with the State's library community to develop a new structure for offering support services to local libraries. Over the past several months, the consultants selected by TSLA to assist with the process have gathered information from a wide variety of stakeholders. They have interacted with more than 900 Tennessee residents to discuss the future needs of the State's public libraries and how the system of regional libraries can most effectively help local libraries fulfill their ultimate mission of serving the public with effective library and information services.

The report that follows outlines recommended steps that can be taken to transform Tennessee's existing system of twelve regional libraries into an extremely efficient and highly effective system of nine regional centers that will provide support for local libraries as they struggle to meet increased demands for 21st century library and information services.

THE PROCESS

In May 2010, the Tennessee State Library & Archives (TSLA) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for "Consulting Services for Evaluation of Regional Library System Services." Himmel & Wilson, Library Consultants, submitted a proposal in response to the RFP and was subsequently selected to conduct the study.

For the last six months, TSLA and the existing regional libraries have been working with Himmel & Wilson to develop a new organizational structure and plan of service for Tennessee's regional libraries. In the course of the study, the consultants gathered information from a wide variety of sources. They reviewed background documents ranging from statistics to reports and minutes from previous meetings held to discuss the future of the regional libraries. The consultants have completed three site visits to Tennessee and have visited several of the regional centers and a sampling of Tennessee libraries of various sizes. Meetings have been held with the Secretary of State and with the State Librarian and Archivist and, even more importantly, with scores of Tennessee residents, to discuss the future needs of the State's public libraries and how the system of regional libraries can most effectively help local libraries fulfill their mission of serving the public. Overall, the consultants have interacted with more than 900 Tennessee residents through web-based surveys, focus groups and personal interviews.

Focus groups attended by local library directors and library trustees from all twelve regions were held in conjunction with the four tri-regional meetings across the State in October 2010. Separate sessions for library trustees and local library directors were held in Sevierville, Crossville, Clarksville and Jackson. A total of 48 trustees and 49 local library directors (an

average of more than 12 individuals per session) participated in the focus groups. The sessions explored existing strengths of the regional libraries, service priorities from the local library perspective and ideas for creating more efficient and effective regional centers. The meetings across the State were also used as an opportunity to conduct personal interviews with the directors of each of the existing regional library centers.

Recognizing that the focus groups provided a somewhat limited sample of the State's public library community, five separate web-based surveys were also conducted. These surveys were designed to collect input from local library directors, local library staff, local library trustees and members of Library "friends" organizations, regional library staff and regional library directors. The response to these surveys was outstanding. A total of 319 trustees and library "Friends," 133 local library directors and 303 local library staff members completed surveys. Trustees and Friends had the option of completing a print-on-paper version of the survey and many took advantage of this alternative. The directors of the existing regions (in the cases of regions with director vacancies, the acting directors and administrative assistants) participated in separate surveys as did 62 regional library staff members.

Follow-up personal interviews were conducted over the phone with each of the regional library directors after the initial information/data collection effort was completed. Additional personal interviews were also completed via telephone with elected officials and other influential State residents with a knowledge of and interest in public library services.

The consultants also presented preliminary findings and recommendations to a meeting of the Tennessee Advisory Council on Libraries (TACL) at a meeting in Nashville in December that also included the regional directors. A subsequent two-day meeting was scheduled with the regional directors to discuss details and to identify solutions to issues related to implementing the reorganization plan.

FINDINGS

The priorities for the regional library centers that were expressed by various groups of stakeholders were remarkably similar. For example, it was very clear that libraries need and want assistance with technology. There was also a high degree of agreement that the consulting/professional assistance offered by regional library directors was essential to the improvement of libraries. Other priorities differed more based on the stakeholder group involved and by the size of library represented. For example, small libraries generally placed a higher priority on cataloging and processing of physical materials while library staff in medium and larger libraries valued continuing education and training to a higher degree. The provision

of direct outreach services, while almost universally seen as a valuable and admirable, was clearly lower in importance to a majority of stakeholders.

The charts on the following pages illustrate the priorities that emerged through the web surveys. Most responses were broken down by size of library. In the case of the regional library directors and staff, respondents were asked for priorities for small medium and large libraries in their region. Responses from local library directors were categorized based on library budgets. A composite “average” rating is also provided. Additional information summarizing the opinions expressed in the focus group sessions and the responses to the web surveys are included as appendices to this report.

Technology support was rated as the highest priority or the second highest priority by all five groups. However, it should be noted that the directors of the libraries with the highest funding (those with operating budgets of at least \$ 500,000 per year) rated technology support lower (3rd in priority) than their colleagues in libraries with less funding. This is understandable since many of the large libraries either have internal information technology (IT) staff or have access to IT staff through their municipality or, in some instances, through their counties.

Consulting and professional assistance services were seen as core services by survey respondents. This aspect of the program of service of the regional libraries was ranked either first, second or third by all five groups. Other contenders as “core services” were continuing education and the cataloging of state purchased library materials. Continuing education was rated as high as second (by local library staff) and as low as seventh (by regional library staff). Cataloging of state purchased library materials was ranked second highest by regional library staff and third highest by regional library directors. The rest of the groups placed this service as the fourth priority. However, the directors of the local libraries with annual operating budgets of less than \$100,000 ranked the service as a close second to technology support.

Physical processing of materials (as distinct from *cataloging*) was ranked higher by the regional library staff and regional directors than by groups representing the local libraries. However, survey results show that the libraries with annual budgets less than \$ 100,000 place a high value on all services related to the acquisition, cataloging and processing of books, non-print media and other physical library materials. Outreach services were rated at the low end among all groups, although outreach services to children consistently out-ranked outreach services to rural/unserved areas and to seniors.

Regional Library Directors' Assessment of Member Library Priorities

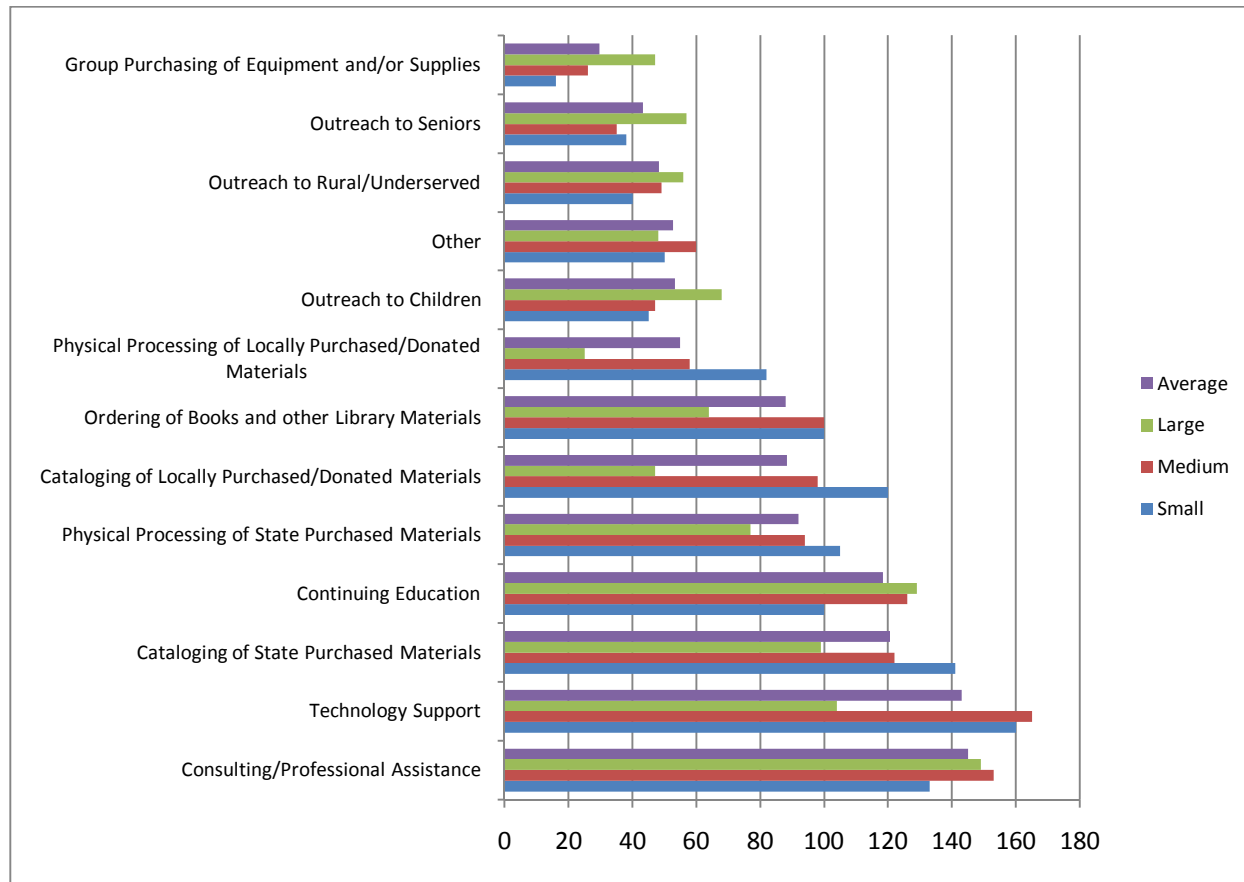


Chart 1
Regional Library Director Assessment of Priorities

Local Library Directors' Assessment of Priorities

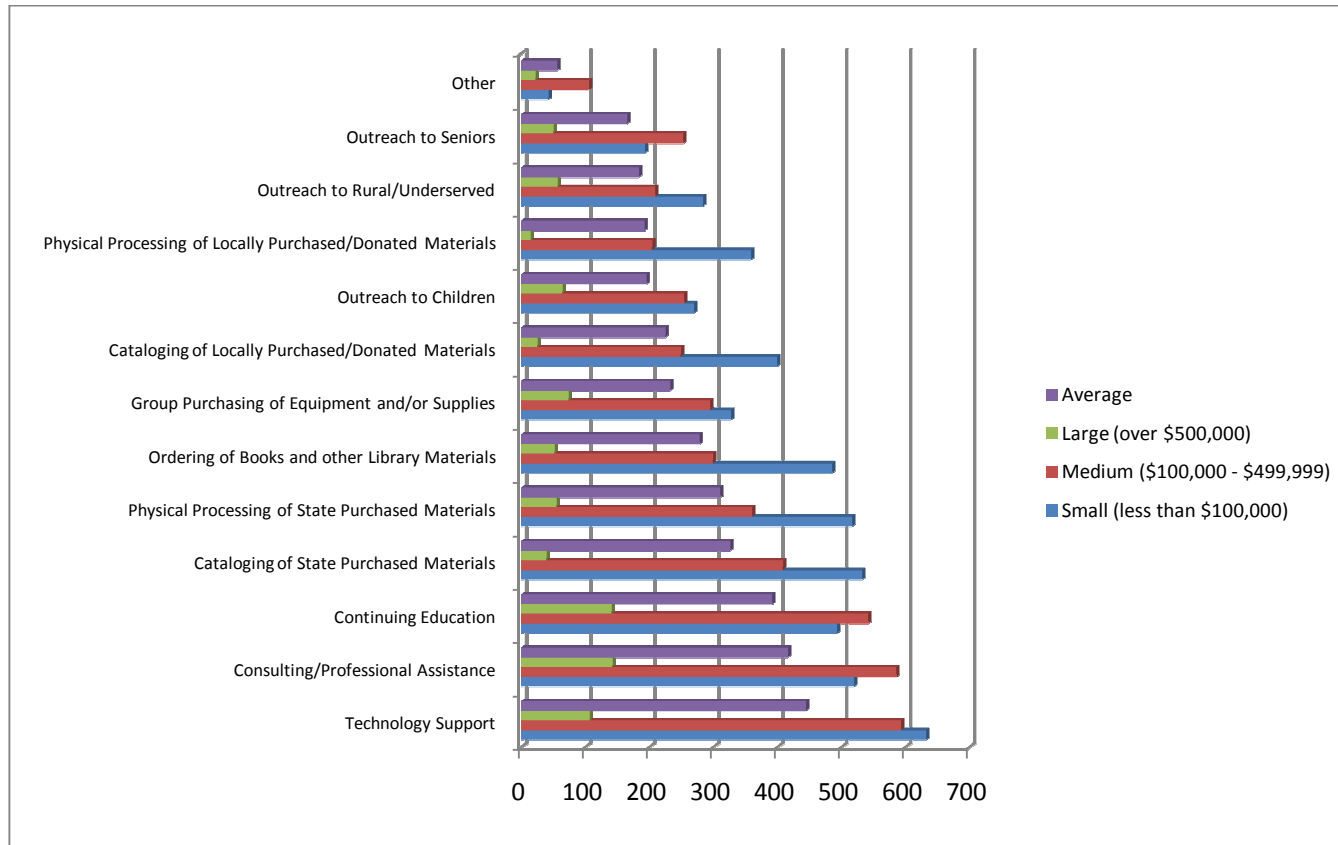


Chart 2
Local Library Director Assessment of Priorities

Regional Library Staff Assessment of Member Library Priorities

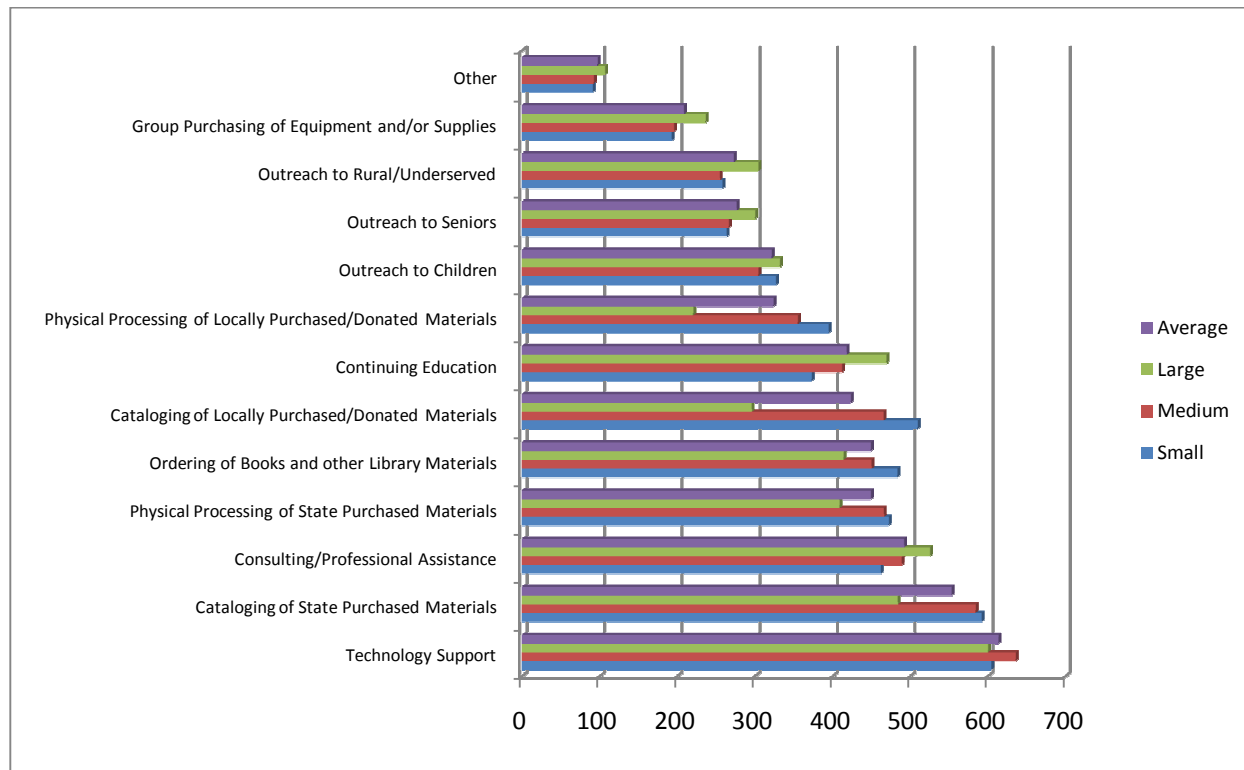


Chart 3

Regional Library Staff Assessment of Priorities

Local Library Staff Assessment of Priorities

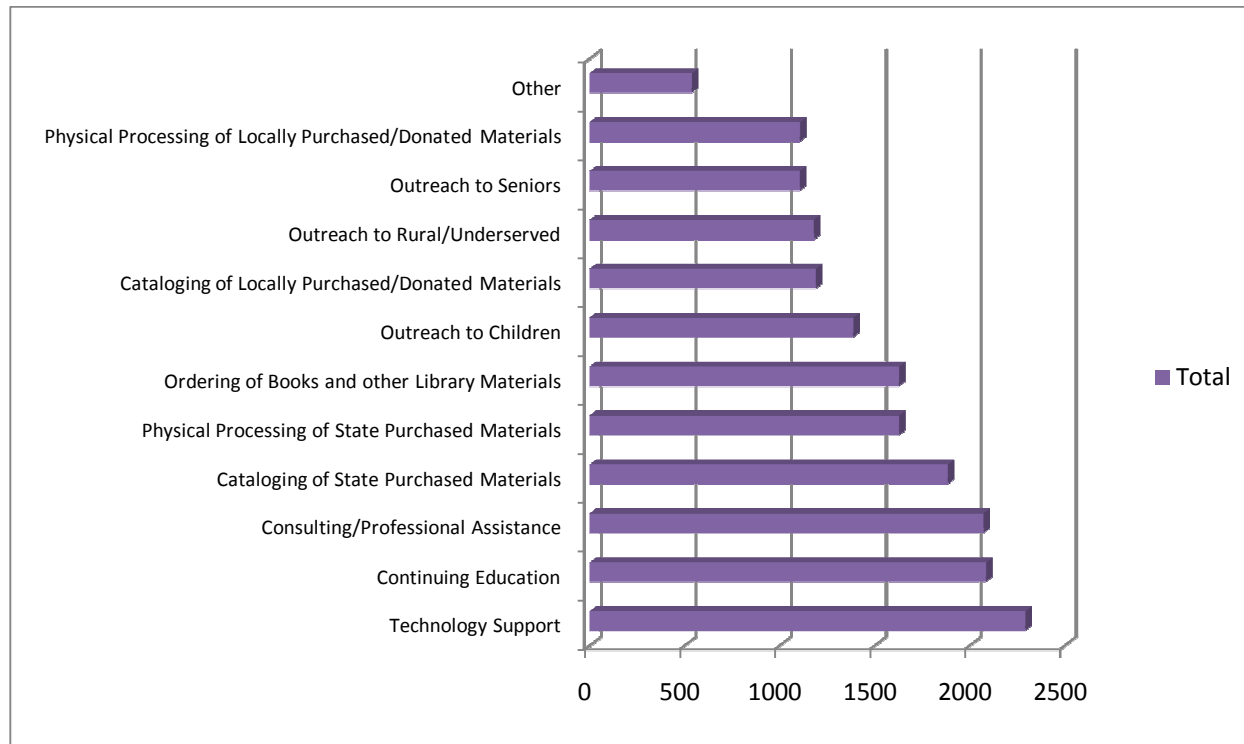


Chart 4

Local Library Staff Assessment of Priorities

Note: Size of library is not reported on this chart. Local library staff members and trustees/Friends were not asked to provide information regarding library budget. This was intentional since the consultants believed that these groups might be unaware of these figures.

Library Trustee and Friends' Assessment of Member Library Priorities

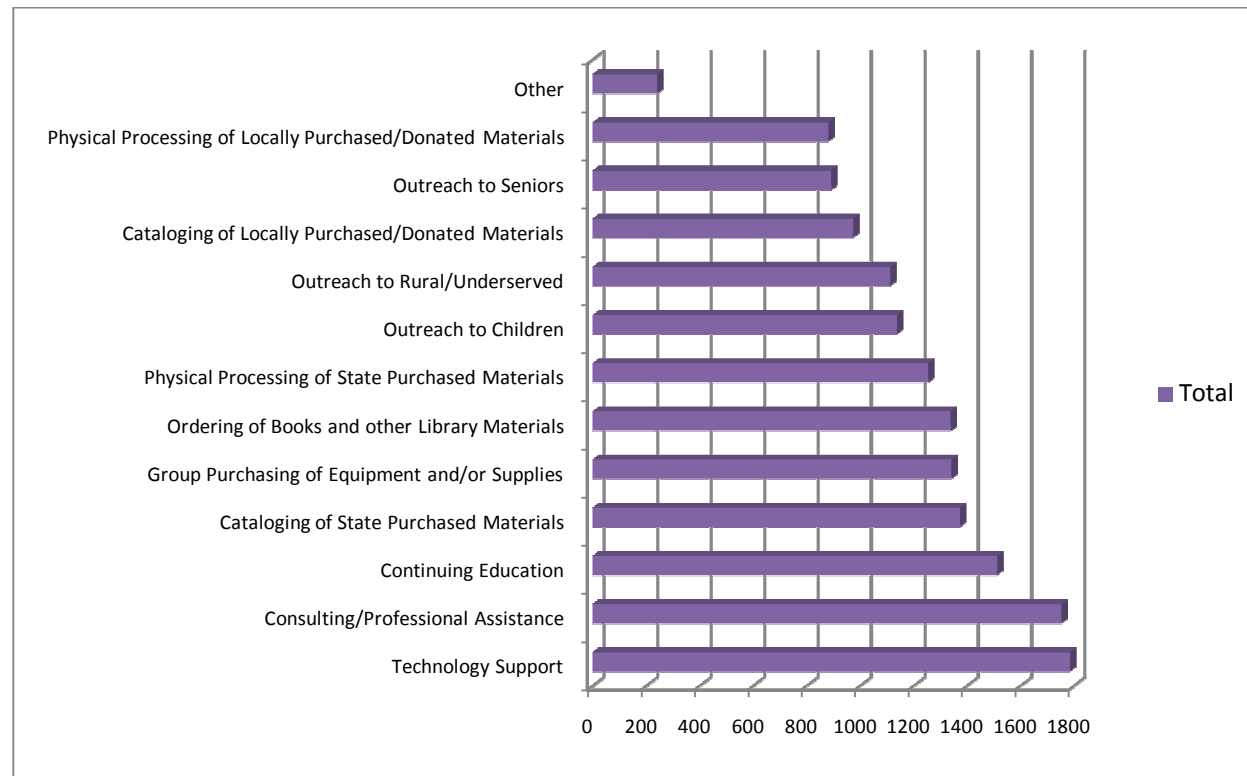


Chart 5
Library Trustee and Friends' Assessment of Priorities

Note: Size of library is not reported on this chart. Local library staff members and trustees/Friends were not asked to provide information regarding library budget. This was intentional since the consultants believed that these groups might not be aware of these figures.

The priorities identified by focus group participants were quite similar to those expressed through the survey process. The emphasis placed on the importance of consulting and professional assistance service provided by the regional library directors was particularly strong. Local library directors and trustees generally had high praise for the directors of “their” regional library center. It was clear that attendance by the regional directors at many, if not most, local library board meetings and regular visits by regional library directors as well as personal interaction between local directors and the regional directors have resulted in strong bonds. Regional library directors are seen as professional resources that libraries can and do call upon on a regular basis. This is of particularly high importance in a state like Tennessee in which a relatively low percentage of local library directors hold degrees in library science. In addition to their consultative role, the regional library directors are also envisioned as advocates with “Nashville” (TSLA and State Government) on behalf of local libraries.

The opinions of focus group participants on the topic of merger/consolidation of regions was mixed. While some believed that consolidation was the only option for preserving the regional concept, others were concerned that extended travel times and/or having too many libraries in a single region would water down highly valued consulting/professional assistance services. The general opinion seemed to be that some consolidation might be plausible but that the size of any given region needed to be reasonable. Some suggested that the physical size of regions might be larger in Western Tennessee than in Central and Eastern Tennessee because of the topography. Travel time seemed to take precedence over the number of square miles or the number of counties served among focus group attendees.

In an effort to determine the relative importance of support services provided by the regional centers (services designed to help libraries) as opposed to direct services (services such as outreach services in which regional centers deliver materials directly to end users such as children in Head Start Centers), the consultants introduced a mission statement that was recently chosen by a Michigan Library Cooperative (The Suburban Library Cooperative [SLC] in Sterling Heights, MI). SLC is facing financial challenges even greater in magnitude than those confronting Tennessee’s regional libraries.

When the SLC cut to the core, it decided that its mission was “We make libraries better.” When this mission was presented to focus group participants, there was a high degree of agreement that this was an appropriate mission statement for Tennessee’s regional library system. Outreach services were acknowledged as being highly valuable to the recipients of the services; however, given limited funding, they were seen as secondary to the core mission of the regions to improve libraries. Outreach services to day cares, Head Start centers and senior housing are

seen as important, but local libraries rather than regional library centers were seen as the entities that should be providing the service(s).

Personal interviews conducted with elected officials and other knowledgeable individuals echoed similar themes. The importance of technology support was underscored as was the need to share scarce resources between and among libraries. Interviewees almost uniformly expressed the opinion that there could be some consolidation of regional offices. However, several cautioned that the regions need to be manageable in size. A maximum of 90 minutes travel time from the regional office to any given library in the region was suggested as a reasonable limit in focus groups and in the interviews with current regional directors.

LOOKING FORWARD RATHER THAN BACKWARD

There is a tendency for stakeholders of any given service system to favor incremental changes to existing services rather than a major reinvention of a valued service provider. There was certainly some element of this predisposition among survey respondents, focus group participants and interviewees. However, many in the Tennessee library community were open to change and very forward in their thinking.

Regional directors, while uniformly concerned about the impact of major changes on existing regional staff members, were extremely cooperative and contributed greatly to envisioning what a new model of regional service might look like. A two day meeting involving key TSLA staff, the regional directors and the consultants offered an opportunity to discuss potential problems and to identify solutions that would move a restructuring of services forward.

The web-surveys were designed primarily as a tool to identify priorities among existing services and responses reflected that to some extent. However, the high rating placed on technology support and professional/consulting assistance underscored the fact that many in the Tennessee library community recognize that changes to the existing service model are necessary.

Focus group participants also provided specific ideas on increasing the effectiveness of regional centers. The overall spirit seemed to be one of hope and optimism. Representatives of Tennessee's libraries ranging from "shelvers" and clerical assistants to trustees and directors clearly value regional services and believe that their libraries' abilities to serve the public would suffer greatly if regional services were not available. They were also hopeful that the

restructuring would result in a service model that, in spite of reduced funding levels, would be even more effective than what currently exists.

PRINCIPLES APPLIED IN DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS

The consultants developed a set of principles to apply to decisions regarding the restructuring of regional services. They are:

- The mission of the regional service centers is to support and improve local libraries rather than being a direct provider of services to end-users.
- Service priorities should be driven by the future needs of libraries rather than by what already exists or by what has existed in the past.
- The core services to be offered under the new model should drive the number and size of service centers rather than service being dictated by the number and/or size of proposed regions.
- The new model should encourage and enable libraries to share their scarce resources more efficiently.
- End results (e.g., getting materials cataloged and processed) is more important than how the results are achieved (e.g., in-house cataloging and processing staff, pre-processing/outsourcing, etc.).

MISSION OF THE REGIONAL LIBRARY CENTERS

The TSLA website identifies the **existing** mission of the regional library system. It says that the system's mission is:

- *To provide supplementary library materials to member public libraries*
- *To assist local governments in public library development and expansion*
- *To provide continuing education to local library staff and trustees*
- *To assist in the selection and maintenance of library technology*
- *To provide direct outreach library services to the disadvantaged who have difficulty using local public libraries*

The new mission for Tennessee's regional library system would revise the existing fifth priority (provide direct outreach library services to the disadvantaged who have difficulty using local public libraries), would modify and re-order the remaining four priorities and would add an

additional priority. The over-arching ***mission envisioned for the new system*** of regional libraries is ***“We make local libraries better!”*** A detailed expression of this new mission follows.

The mission of Tennessee’s new system of regional library centers is:

- *to assist local governments and public libraries in the development and improvement of public library services,*
- *to assist libraries in the selection, maintenance and use of library technologies,*
- *to provide supplementary library materials and digital content to member public libraries and to facilitate the preparation of materials for public use (cataloging & processing),*
- *to facilitate the sharing of resources between and among libraries through a delivery system and opportunities to participate in shared automation systems,*
- *to provide continuing education to local library staff and trustees and,*
- *to encourage and enable public libraries to provide outreach services to the disadvantaged.*

The mission statement is organized in priority order. All of the elements are very important. However, since the funding allocated for providing service throughout the State is very limited, the regions will need to focus on those services that have the greatest impact on local libraries. It should be mentioned that the removal of the “outreach” services bullet point is not an indication that the consultants believe that these services are unimportant. In fact, they are extremely important. They are being removed solely because the regional library centers need to concentrate their effort on supporting libraries rather than providing direct services to end-users. The new regional centers should work with local libraries to help them develop or extend outreach services. The new model works to shift the provision of all “direct” services to local residents to the public libraries, providing those libraries with collections and training to serve head start students, nursing home residents and others who may not be able to visit local libraries in person.

THE PROPOSED REINVENTION OF REGIONAL LIBRARY SERVICES

Summary

The proposed plan for reinventing regional library services does more than simply re-arrange services. Some existing services go away. At the same time, and in spite of working with a reduced budget, new services are added. Remarkably, the new model allocates more funding

to the purchase of library materials for local libraries. It establishes a delivery system to facilitate the sharing of materials between and among libraries. It expands technology support services and creates the framework through which small libraries can participate in a shared automation system.

Some existing services are maintained and strengthened. Consulting and professional assistance and advice services are strengthened and the capacity for regions to provide continuing education and training is expanded modestly.

In order to move in these new directions, some services must be eliminated and/or modified. The number of regional offices is reduced from twelve to nine. The outreach services provided by some the regions (direct services to end-users rather than support services provided to libraries) are shifted to local libraries. Highly labor-intensive methodologies currently used by some regions for cataloging and processing materials are replaced with a streamlined process that involves outsourcing most cataloging and processing services under a centralized contract. This method will also eliminate a great deal of physical handling of materials by regional staff and it will reduce the amount of space needed in regional offices. An added bonus to this approach is that new materials will be drop-shipped directly to libraries thereby making items available more quickly.

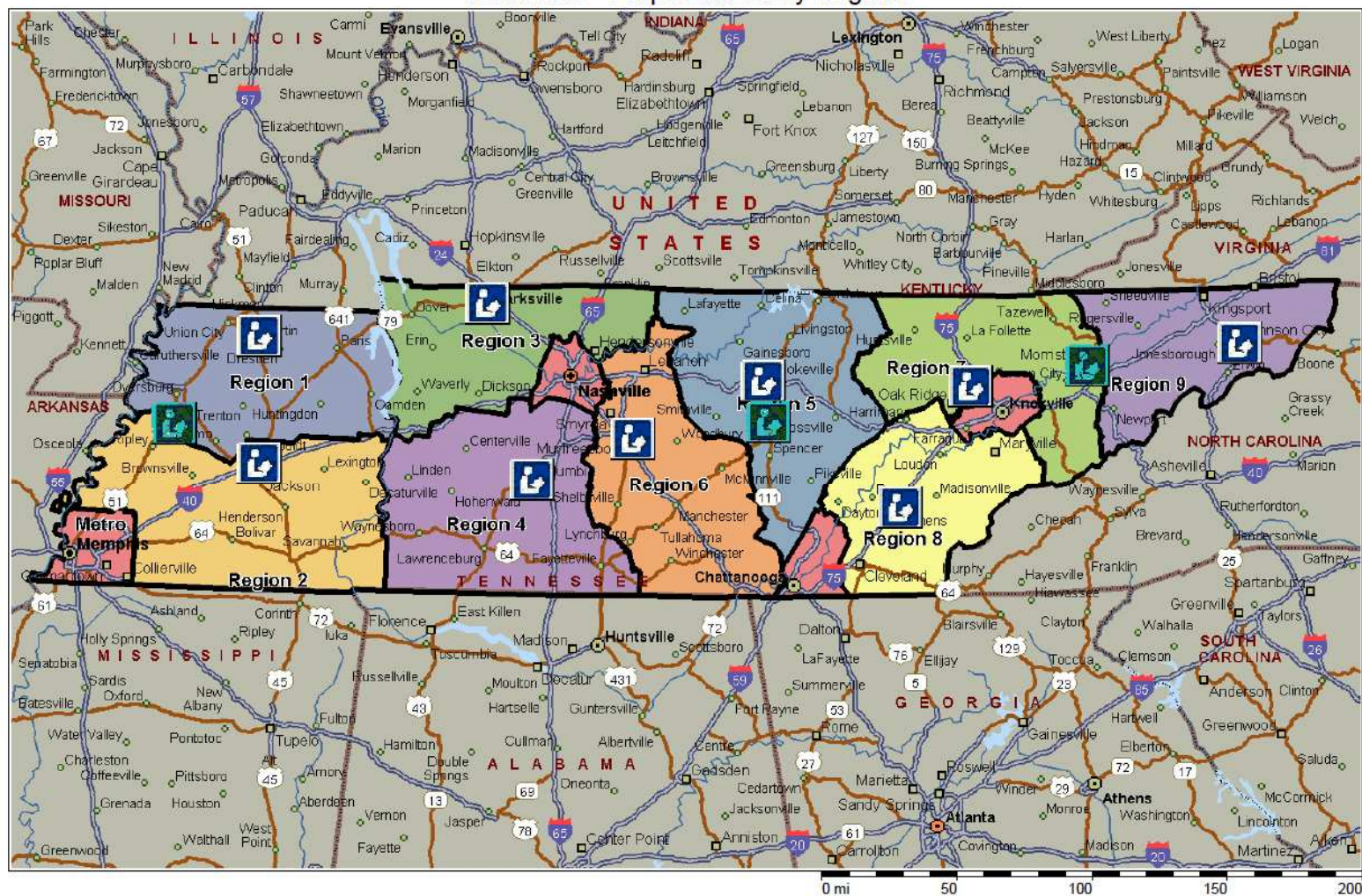
Details of the Proposed Plan

As was stated in the principles, the number and size of regions under the new plan was driven by what would be necessary to deliver core services efficiently and effectively. The consultants did not start with any “magic number” of regions. As has already been stated, the new model replaces the existing twelve regions with nine regional offices. The size and configuration of the regions was heavily influenced by the opinions of focus group participants and by web survey results. The library community placed a high importance on professional assistance and personal interaction with regional library directors. This led the consultants to the conclusion that libraries served by the new regions should be no more than 90 minutes from the regional office.

Although many focus group participants and web survey respondents expressed the opinion that regional directors don’t really have to attend every meeting of local library boards, there was consensus that a high level of personal interaction between regional directors and local library directors and trustees is desirable. The configuration of counties proposed places a regional office within 75 minutes for the vast majority of libraries in the State.

The map on the following page shows the new configuration of regions. The blue international symbol for libraries is used to designate existing regional offices that would remain open while the three library symbols shaded in green represent offices that would close under the reorganization. The map below and a companion map showing library locations can be found in Appendix I in the companion volume to this report.

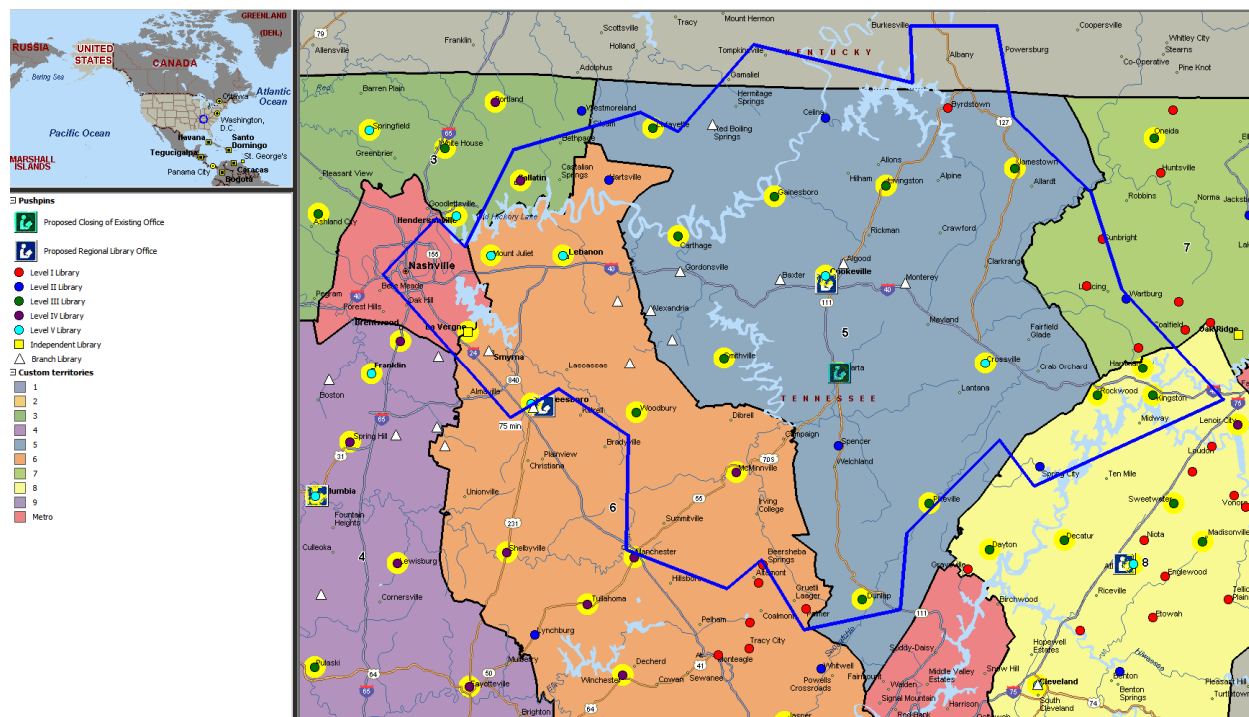
Tennessee - Proposed Library Regions



Copyright © and (P) 1988–2008 Microsoft Corporation and/or its suppliers. All rights reserved. <http://www.microsoft.com/mappoint/>
 Certain mapping and direction data © 2008 NAVTEQ. All rights reserved. The Data for areas of Canada includes information taken with permission from Canadian authorities, including: © Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, © Queen's Printer for Ontario. NAVTEQ and NAVTEQ ON BOARD are trademarks of NAVTEQ. © 2008 Tele Atlas North America, Inc. All rights reserved. Tele Atlas and Tele Atlas North America are trademarks of Tele Atlas, Inc. © 2008 by Applied Geographic Systems. All rights reserved.

Map 1 – Proposed Regions

Appendix J provides individual maps for each region that show the number and classification (Level) of each of the libraries within each region and Appendix K offers individual maps for each of the nine new regions with a 75 minute drive time from the regional office superimposed on the map. An example of one of these maps (Region 5) is provided below.



Map 2 – Example of 75 Minute Drive Time Map

Professional Assistance and Consulting

By all accounts, the professional advice and assistance provided to libraries by regional directors is critical to their success. Assistance is given on topics ranging from budgets and building projects to technology and collection development. Frequent personal interaction between regional directors and local library directors and trustees has paid dividends in terms of trust and acceptance. Regional directors are not seen by the local libraries as outsiders imposing rules and regulations from a higher level of government but, rather, as knowledgeable friends who have the best interests of the libraries at heart.

Regional directors introduce and interpret rules that accompany State and Federal aid programs. They advise libraries and boards of duties and responsibilities under law. They introduce emerging professional trends and best practices. They act as a trusted liaison between Nashville and local communities. The size of the new regions and the modest

reduction in the number of regions were designed to ensure that the professional consulting assistance would be preserved, and, in fact, enhanced.

An important consideration in developing the nine-region plan was the number of library governance units to be served by a regional office and the number of physical structures to be serviced. This is a difficult issue. In some areas of the State, county libraries are the prevailing model. In other areas of the State, the prevailing model is small municipal libraries.

The variation in the number of counties served by the new regions is significant. For example, the new Region 7 covers only 9 counties. In comparison, the new Region 5 includes 14 counties. However, there are only 14 governance units (one for each county) and a total of 21 buildings (including branch locations) in Region 5's 14 counties whereas there are 31 governance units and 34 buildings in Region 7's 9 counties.

The staffing plan for the new regions includes additional professional staff in recognition of the importance that the library community placed on this aspect of regional services. While the new regions are somewhat larger than the current ones, full-time associate directors are assigned to three of the new regions because of the complexity of the challenges those regions face (e.g., large number of governance units, involvement in a shared automation system, etc.). Each of the six remaining regions is assigned half-time associate positions. In addition to assisting the regional directors with the professional assistance and counsel function, the presence of the associate directors will significantly add to the regions' capacity to provide continuing education and training experiences for local library directors, staff and trustees.

The size and the allocation of counties under the new plan are intended to ensure that regional directors or associate directors should be able to attend approximately half of the local library board meetings and should be able to visit all of the libraries in their region for consultative and training purposes on a regular basis. A chart showing the assignment of counties by region, the number of governance units and facilities in each county and region can be found in Appendix L.

Technology Support

As was noted earlier, technology support was rated highly in focus groups, surveys and interviews. Furthermore, technology support was seen as a growing need. Libraries have become highly dependent on technology both as a tool to streamline internal processes (circulation systems, online catalogs, etc.) and as mechanisms to deliver services to end-users (web-based systems for placing holds, delivery of content through licensed databases,

downloadable content, etc.). While some of the larger public libraries in the State have trained information technology (IT) staff and while some receive some technical technology support through their county or municipality, the vast majority of libraries are faced with the challenge of establishing and maintaining complex technology systems with only “on-the-job” training. Furthermore, in one and two-person library operations, basic operations such as checking out materials, reshelving materials and facility issues more than occupy the staff time available. This leaves little or no time for maintaining technologies even if the staff had adequate training.

The new plan for regional library centers builds and expands on an existing two-tiered technology support model that is already working. Tennessee is somewhat unique in providing “network service coordinators (NSCs)” who serve libraries across several existing regions as well as some day-to-day assistance from the regions. The new plan bolsters both aspects of this service. Funding for one additional network services coordinator is provided. In addition, each of the new regions is provided with a full-time technology assistant.

The network services coordinators bring a high level of technology and networking expertise to their positions. They are qualified to assist with network design, network infrastructure and highly technical issues. The technology assistants at the regions fall more into the category of technicians. They will handle day-to-day troubleshooting issues and technology maintenance issues as well as helping local library staff by providing one-on-one training, small group sessions and webinars related to technology. Technology assistants will also work with other regional staff to assist libraries with acquiring e-rate discounts.

Essentially, the regional-based technology assistants will provide a first-line of defense freeing the network services coordinators to deal with higher-level technology issues. However, the new, enhanced model for technology support will require a higher level of coordination between the network service coordinators and the regional technology assistants to reap the maximum benefit. Developing a shared automated system for tracking critical incidents and actions taken by both the NSCs and the regional-based technology assistants will be critical. While the regional-based technology assistants will be supervised by the regional directors, a high level of interaction with the NSC serving any given region is essential.

The State level NSCs will be charged with establishing protocols and providing ongoing training to the technology assistants that will firmly establish respective roles and responsibilities as well as maintenance schedules and incident reporting protocols.

Acquisition, Cataloging and Processing of New Materials

A large percentage of the materials on the shelves of Tennessee's local public libraries have been purchased with State and Federal funds. The percentage of locally owned materials is generally much higher in larger libraries and lower in smaller libraries. In fact, the collections in some Tennessee libraries are almost entirely dependent on a flow of materials purchased with State and Federal funds supplemented only with gifts from library users.

Tennessee libraries are unique in this regard. With few exceptions, funding for the majority of materials in public libraries is derived from local rather than state or Federal sources. This unique reality in Tennessee has resulted in the establishment and maintenance of an elaborate system for acquiring, cataloging and processing materials through the regional libraries.

There was a time when the prevailing model made sense. There were limited sources for quality cataloging data. Book vendors and jobbers offered little or nothing in the way of customized processing services. In short, if library materials were going to be acquired, appropriately cataloged and prepared for use (e.g., jackets, pockets, labels, etc.), these functions had to happen at the regional level.

Fortunately, times have changed. Cataloging-in-publication data, cataloging information from online bibliographic databases and vendor provided bibliographic (Machine-Readable Cataloging or "MARC") records are now widely available. Automated acquisitions systems are provided by nearly every commercial book-jobber. Customized processing services are also offered by almost all library material vendors.

There is no question that acquisitions, cataloging and processing of new materials were important to many participants in the focus groups and respondents to the web surveys. These services were far more important to small libraries than to large libraries; however, Tennessee has more small libraries than medium and large-sized libraries. It is clear that any rational reinvention of regional library services must account for acquisition, cataloging and processing activity.

The reinvention plan for Tennessee's system of regional library centers actually allocates more funding for the purchase of new materials than has been available in recent years. Budget cuts and inflationary pressures have taken their toll on the amount of money the existing regions have been able to allocate to new materials purchases. The elimination of outreach services frees some additional funds to purchase new books and non-print media resources for local libraries. In the past, some regional funding has been funneled into collections of materials that

were owned and maintained by the regions to support outreach efforts. Furthermore, the replacement of the existing, highly labor-intensive model for cataloging and processing with a less costly commercial “pre-processing” system makes additional funds available for purchasing materials for local libraries.

The proposed reorganization of Tennessee’s system of regional libraries accepts the premise that materials purchased with State and Federal funds will continue to be cataloged and processed for local libraries. However, the reorganization plan rejects the notion that the bulk of this work must take place at regional offices. Although several regional offices have already moved toward outsourcing much of this activity, other regions have not.

The new plan envisions a coordinated system for acquisitions, cataloging and processing. The key ingredient in the new system is a centralized contract for these services through an established book vendor/jobber. A number of firms provide these services. Under the reorganization plan, the Tennessee State Library and Archives/Secretary of State’s Office would issue a request for proposal (RFP) for the pre-processing of materials at fixed costs. While the primary purpose of the RFP would be to secure the best cost for cataloging and processing services for materials purchased with State and Federal funds, an option should be included in the RFP for individual libraries to participate in the program so they can receive the same pricing structure for locally purchased materials.

The outsourcing of these services will do a great deal to streamline the process of getting library materials into the hands of the Tennessee residents. It will result in greater standardization of cataloging across the State (a benefit in making resource sharing systems work efficiently) and it will get materials on the shelves of libraries more quickly. In many of the regions, physical volumes are well-travelled before they reach the library shelf. They are shipped to the regions where they are unpacked, cataloged, processed, re-packed and shipped to the libraries where they are once again unpacked and inspected before being placed on the shelves.

Under the new system, the middle steps are removed. Materials are ordered using a coordinated online system. Materials are cataloged and processed based on customized profiles established pursuant to the RFP and they are then drop-shipped directly to the libraries in shelf-ready form.

The new system recognizes that small libraries will still need help in the acquisition, cataloging and processing of locally-purchased materials and for unique items that may not be available through mainline vendors. To this end, the new plan provides both a statewide

Acquisitions/Technical Services Coordinator and full-time technical services assistants at each of the nine regional offices. The State-level position will be responsible for developing the RFP and, with others, evaluating the bids resulting from the process. This person will coordinate the establishment of procedures for an ordering process in which local libraries make selections using online tools that are reviewed at the regional office prior to being placed with the vendors. A system will also be devised to reduce the number of MARC records purchased through the selected vendor for popular items that are purchased by many libraries.

The region-based technical services assistants will act as the liaison between the local libraries and the State-level coordinator. They will train local library staff in using the system, will review orders to monitor unintended duplication of resources and will work with the libraries to achieve a higher level of coordinated collection development than has been possible in the past. The local technical services assistants will *not* handle physical volumes as the cataloging and processing staff have in the past. However, they will assist local libraries (via telephone and computer-based interaction) with cataloging and processing issues.

Resource Sharing – Courier Service and Shared Library Automation Systems

Resource sharing activities are promoted and supported under the reinvention plan. Some would argue that Tennessee can't afford to spend limited funds on resource sharing activities. The consultants believe that Tennessee can't afford **NOT TO** invest in resource sharing. The fact that the resources of many, if not most, Tennessee public libraries are limited supports the notion that resources should be shared between and among libraries in the most effective ways possible.

It is not coincidental that the region that currently experiences the highest level of resource sharing activity (Watauga) is the region with both a shared automation system and a courier service in place. In an ideal world, all public libraries in Tennessee would be on a single shared automation system and would be part of a coordinated delivery network. The new regional plan takes steps toward a broadly deployed shared automation system and major steps toward the establishment of a delivery network.

Funding is provided under the new plan to support activities related to the establishment of a shared automation system in which small libraries could participate. Currently, small libraries have very limited options in regard to library automation. Many of the small standalone circulation systems are aging. Some are no longer supported by their vendors. Others are simply ineffectual. The new plan allocates funds for an ILS system administrator and a small amount for operational costs related to a new integrated system.

The new plan also provides funding for the establishment of a network of delivery/courier services throughout the State. The existing courier system in place in the Watauga region would be expanded to serve all of the libraries included in the new Region 9. Four additional new delivery services would be established. Each of these courier services would serve two of the new regions. To the extent possible, the new courier system should build on what already exists in the Watauga region and in the Nashville area.

A system that provides twice-weekly delivery to all libraries is envisioned as the eventual outcome. Funding has been allocated for ten half-time delivery assistants (two for each courier operation to afford flexibility in scheduling and to account for absences due to illness, etc.). Funding is also provided to support the lease of additional delivery vehicles through the State, equipment (such as delivery bins, dollies, etc.) and operational expenses.

The consultants believe that a rolling implementation of courier services is advisable. Lessons learned in establishing operating procedures in one area will improve the eventual quality and efficiency of services in other areas of the State.

Continuing Education and Training

The need for the provision of continuing education and training experiences for public library workers and trustees is great. Poor salaries and wages for library workers result in high staff turnover in some areas of the State. The dearth of professional librarians in Tennessee public libraries means that a vast majority of public libraries are being managed with little or no training other than the “on-the-job” variety.

The existing regional libraries do a magnificent job of providing a considerable amount of training with virtually no dedicated funding. Although funding for continuing education activities is only increased modestly under the new plan, the capacity of the new regions to offer additional training opportunities is increased. The re-establishment of associate director positions will afford directors the opportunity to develop more robust continuing education programs. It is also envisioned that the full-time dedicated technology assistants and the technical services assistants in each region will perform some training functions, albeit mostly on a one-to-one basis.

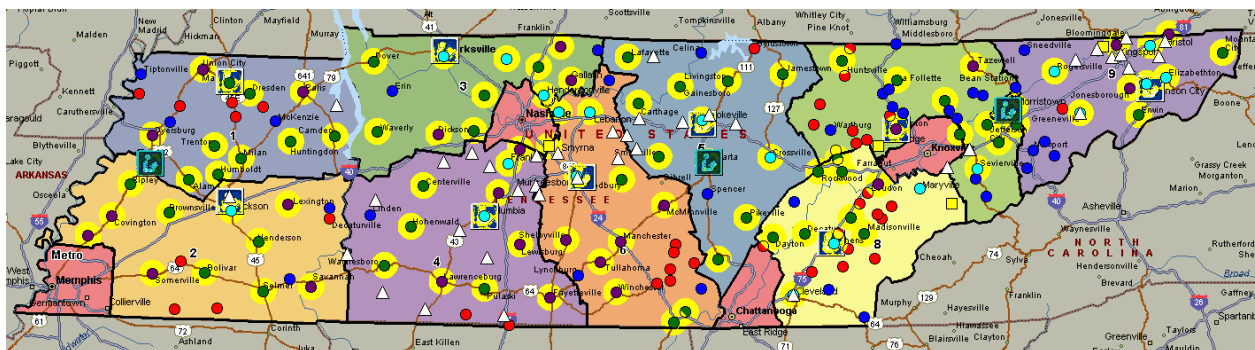
Administrative Support

Each of the nine new regions is allocated a full-time administrative support position. The individuals holding these positions will act as office managers, receptionists, fiscal agents and bookkeepers. They will also provide secretarial support for regional staff. In addition, the administrative assistants will be charged with duties related to the collection of descriptive and statistical data from libraries to comply with State and Federal requirements.

A Further Word About Discontinued Services

The shifting of outreach services to local libraries under the new plan is a valid concern that has already been addressed several times in this report. However, a brief additional note should serve to assure the library community that this step was not taken lightly. In fact, the consultants believe that, over time, the shift of outreach services to local libraries will result in better and more uniformly available access.

A careful examination of the distribution of library facilities in Tennessee tends to support the conclusion that most residents of the State have reasonably good access to public libraries. The second map in Appendix I (reproduced below) shows the location of libraries and their “levels” as established by the TSLA. Level I libraries (those serving the smallest populations) are shown in red. Level II libraries are coded in blue, Level III in green, Level IV in purple and Level V in turquoise. Level III, IV and V libraries (those serving larger populations) are further indicated by a yellow highlight ring.



Map 3 – Public Library Locations

The consultants attempted to determine the maximum travel time to a local library in the State. What we determined was that only a small number of remote areas of the State are more than 30 minutes from a public library. Well over 90 percent of Tennessee’s population resides within

20 minutes from a public library location. Physical access to public libraries in Tennessee is reasonably good for individuals who are mobile and have access to motor vehicles.

However, the outreach services offered by the existing regions have generally targeted segments of the population that lack mobility or transportation (e.g., daycare centers, Head Start programs, senior housing sites, etc.). A discontinuation of services to these sites would represent a real loss.

At the same time, an examination of these services reveals that they are currently very spotty in their implementation. Some of the regions have already discontinued outreach services. Furthermore, a miniscule portion of the daycares, Head Start programs and senior centers in the State are being served. While those receiving services are getting something of great value, the funding necessary to effectively serve individuals in these settings on a statewide basis is simply not available. Local libraries must take the lead if individuals with limited mobility are going to be served on a statewide basis.

The shift of outreach services to local public libraries under the new plan can be accomplished by a combination of methods and will require a number of specific steps. They include:

- Discussions with and guidance for local library boards and directors about policies that allow “institutional” borrowing.
- Training for library staff and volunteers interested in helping with service to institutionalized populations and other disadvantaged groups.
- Distribution of existing State-owned collections in regional library centers to those libraries willing to undertake outreach efforts.
- Direct service grants to public libraries for additional materials, curriculum kits and pilot projects.

In the end, the consultants believe that the regions must concentrate on serving their core customers, that is, local libraries. The distribution of outreach collections developed by the regions to libraries willing to assume a greater responsibility for outreach services in their area is a first step in meeting some of the existing needs. However, efforts should also be made to connect local libraries and the staff associated with the organizations that are currently served. Helping local libraries develop policies and procedures for outreach services fits nicely under the mission of “making local libraries better.”

Cost Model

Several documents are provided in the appendices that appear in the companion volume to this report. Appendix M offers a detailed account of the staffing costs necessary to implement the reinvention plan. This is significant since a large portion of the expenses under both the existing regional model and the new regional model are related to human resources.

These staffing costs (along with an accounting of all other costs) are provided in Appendix N. Appendix N also includes annotations that present some of the assumptions made in arriving at the amount allocated. Appendix N is reproduced on the following page.

**APPENDIX N -
Proposed Nine-Region Budget**

Nine Regional Office Proposed Budget								
Category	Running Total							
Original Amount	\$ 7,732,600							
Reduction in Allocation	\$ 1,354,500							
Remaining Allocation	\$ 6,378,100							
Anticipated Reversion (7.5% of original amount)	\$ 579,945							
Available for Reconfigured Regions	\$ 5,798,155							
Full-Time Staff Salaries, Wages and Benefits	\$ 2,324,700	see staffing detail						
Sub-total	\$ 3,473,455							
Part-Time Wages and Benefits	\$ 310,500	see staffing detail						
Sub-total	\$ 3,162,955							
Centralized Staff Wages and Benefits	\$ 222,750							
Sub-total	\$ 2,940,205	see staffing detail						
State & Federal Purchased Materials (for Libraries)	\$ 1,500,000	approximately 90,000 items						
Sub-total	\$ 1,440,205	(\$ includes READS)						
Facilities (Rent, Utilities, Janitorial Services & Supplies)	\$ 405,000	9 facilities and 75% of facilities that will close						
Sub-total	\$ 1,035,205							
Materials Processing Costs (RFQ for Pre-Processing)	\$ 190,000	70,000 items full processing and MARC record; 20,000 items processing only						
Sub-total	\$ 845,205							
Integrated Library System Operational Costs	\$ 75,000	Balance+ remaining of \$ 150,000 after allocating \$ 81,000 for staffing & benefits						
Sub-total	\$ 770,205							
State Vehicle Charges (14 vehicles)	\$ 172,000	5 @ \$ 20,000 (delivery) and 9 @ \$ 8,000 (general)						
Sub-total	\$ 598,205							
Personal Vehicles and Travel Expenses	\$ 72,000	Mileage, Meals, Lodging						
Sub-total	\$ 526,205							
Communications	\$ 185,000	Existing telephone & communications + some additional ILS-related expenses						
Sub-total	\$ 341,205							
Copy Machine Leases & Expenses	\$ 27,000	\$ 3,000 per regional office						
Sub-total	\$ 314,205							
Continuing Education Budget	\$ 90,000	\$ 10,000 per regional office						
Sub-total	\$ 224,205							
Small Equipment, Supplies and Other Operations Costs	\$ 270,000	\$ 30,000 per regional office						
Sub-total	\$ 71,205							
Miscellaneous Expenses (Including Delivery Equipment)	\$ 71,205							
Ending Balance	\$ -							